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Towards a Discerning Internationalism

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TOWARDS A DISCERNING INTERNATIONALISM

Three weeks have gone by since the Presidential elections. That unique American happening illustrates a subtle difference between your profession and mine. I think of chemists as being engaged in the arrangement and rearrangement of certain natural elements. This process, on occasion, produces an extraordinary result which is then passed on by unawed scientists to an awed public.

In a similar fashion, politicans are engaged in the arrangement and rearrangement of certain political elements. This process--the electoral process--on occasion, also produces an extraordinary result. In this instance, however, an unawed public then passes on the outcome to awed politicans.

While differing from chemistry in this respect, politics bears a sometime relationship to alchemy. Both share the expectation, for example, that, by obscure and closely-guarded techniques, gold can be produced from lesser metals. The affinity between them is seen in large part through the mysterious mechanism of the electoral college count. On the recent election night, the computers appeared to be yielding, first one, and then another President and, at one point, even a non-President. Finally, Walter Cronkhite, Chet Huntley and other commentators managed to extract Presidential material of electoral college acceptability but of only 43.5% public purity.

As a Democrat, I must acknowledge that this result was synthesized with great skill by the Republican Party. In their haste to gain the Presidency, however, the Republicans scarcely touched the bedrock of the substantial Democratic majorities in the Senate and the House of Representatives. I am happy to assure you, therefore, that the Republic still stands.

In serious retrospect the recent election amounted to a near-miss which brought the nation to the edge of Constitutional chaos. It revealed most of the shortcomings of the system under which the President of the United States is chosen. Not only did it demonstrate the possibility of a break in continuity in the popular selection of the President, it also made clear that the nation could be left with an uncertain interregnum in the most vital single office in the land. The makeshift could last a day, a week, a month, or indefinitely--however long might be required for the House of Representatives to choose a Constitutionally qualified Chief Executive.

To be sure, the flaws in the system have been known for a long time. For a long time, however, we have tended to regard them as amusing anachronisms. It is time to recognize them for what they are, a source of great political mischief and a potential threat to the nation's stability.

One has only to think of the current difficulties in the nation's cities to recognize the dangers in the creaking

electoral structure. An uncertainty in the Presidency would inject doubt and delay into what has become a vital federal role in maintaining a measure of orderly life in these regions. A President's decisions, for example, set the course for dealing with such problems as air and water pollution. They delineate the approach in rebuilding and developing mass transit structures and extending road systems. What a President concludes has a great deal to do with the education, the medical care, the feeding, the housing, the security and countless other aspects of the sheer physical and social well-being of tens of millions of Americans.

The dangers in the current system are seen to be even more striking in terms of the nation's relations with the rest of the world. To illustrate the point, I would note Alfred Nobel's partially erroneous analysis of the bright promise of dynamite. Three-quarters of a century ago, he said of his explosives-factories that they "may make an end of war sooner than your Congresses," and added, "The day when two army corps can annihilate each other in one second, all civilized nations, it is to be hoped, will recoil from war and discharge their troops."

As do most of us, he underrated other professions and overrated his own. It is true that extraordinary progress has been achieved by science in cutting the countdown to doomsday. We have reached a point, as you know, of instant annihilation not only of opposing army corps but of entire nations. In that sense, Alfre Nobel's forecast was most accurate. So, too, was his humanistic prophecy. In the second half of the 20th Century, it has, indeed, become characteristic of civilized peoples to recoil from rather than glorify war. Where Nobel's 19th Century expectation strayed from 20th Century reality, however, is in its political aspect--in his expectation that civilized nations would discharge their armies in consequence of the scientific multiplication of the horrors of military conflict.

War has been made only unfashionable by destructive capacity raised to the nth power; it has not been made impossible. On more than one occasion since Hiroshima and Nagasaki the world has approached the ultimate disaster of nuclear conflict. Indeed, this nation alone has lost tens of thousands of dead in two substantial conflicts since the explosions which, by Nobel's

calculations, certainly qualified as final inhibitors of war. Civilized nations have gone from dynamite to denunciation of war but have stopped short of disarmament.

Today, the prospect of mutual annihilation, as Nobel anticipated, may be a factor in preserving a temporary truce of terror. As between total destruction and total peace, however, it is still possible for nations to opt irrationally or to stumble into the former. In any durable sense, then, the nation's security and the world's safety are likely to lie elsewhere than in a continuous game of nuclear one-upmanship. In this connection, it is to be noted that the ballistics-missile race of the fifties promises to lead to a competition in anti-ballistics systems in the late sixties. I suppose that at some point in time this second competition will phase into a third--into an anti-anti-ballistics race. And so a succession of antis may be expected to grow in a deadly continuum. I dread the thought that somewhere, someone may lose track of a prefix; then the fat will really be in the fire.

The fact is that we are a part of a world structure which--so long as the game of nuclear one-upmanship goes on--remains in its entirety on the razor's edge of oblivion. Any durable security that we may expect to know in these years of our times is likely to be found elsewhere than in military competition pushed to the point of absurdity. It is likely to lie, rather, in a creative foreign policy which builds somewhat more on the human will to live and rather less on the human fear of extinction It is likely to lie in strengthening the "thin line" of reason and restraint which, so to speak, lies between Nobel's opposing army corps. The world can well use agreements, actions and initiatives which tend to diminish rather than augment this tense and fear-laden confrontation. The nuclear test ban treaty which was negotiated in the Kennedy Administration is relevant in this connection. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which was negotiated in the Johnson Administration and has the endorsement of the President-elect, I believe, contains something of the same promise. Certainly, its consideration will be among the first items of business in the Senate of the next Congress.

If a less tenuous peace is a requisite for civilized survival, a creative foreign policy may well be the prime instrument for its achievement. Subject to the advice and consent of the Senate and other Congressional checks, the President is charged with carrying on the nation's relations with the rest of the world. He is the key constitutional figure in maintaining and strengthening peace. It is not difficult, therefore, to comprehend the significance of a continuity in the office--a continuity which is jeopardized by the present electoral system.

A President may place a unique stamp upon policy, but the broad pattern within which he exercises his authority is not broken from administration to administration. Rather, the pattern is determined by the unfolding of developments elsewhere in the world. It is determined, too, by the nation's general response and the specific responses of the Executive Branch of the government to these developments. The interaction of these several elements is a complex process. I am persuaded, however, that what emerges as the "international situation" does

not hinge upon whom CBS or NBC has declared the winner of the Presidential election. The situation does change to be sure, but it is not subject to miraculous or overnight change. Indeed, from the point of view of international stability, it is best that changes be neither abrupt nor drastic. Nor are they likely to be unless significant and necessary adjustments of policy have been too long delayed.

It seems to me most commendable that Mr. Johnson and Mr. Nixon have recognized the essential continuity of this aspect of the Presidency. A smooth transfer of responsibility over the nation's foreign policy is especially needed at this time because the effort to achieve peace in Viet Nam has reached a most difficult stage. It is also needed because on a much broader scale than Viet Nam the flow of international events and the nation's general response to them are now in major transition. In my judgment, this period of change began during the incumbent administration; barring overwhelming developments abroad, it is not likely to be reversed in the next. It is as

though there has been reached an ebb in the great tide of our involvement in world affairs after World War II.

To clarify the point, I would note that over the past quarter of a century the nation's concerns have been thrust outward from the continental limits in every direction. We have moved into wide new contacts--economic, cultural, scientific and political and military contacts--with all parts of the world. The foreign policy by which this massive outward projection has been channeled is usually termed internationalism and in recent decades that designation has been clothed with a certain intrinsic and automatic virtue. The policy for which it stands, therefore, is set apart from a predecessor which is labeled isolationism and to which considerably less virtue is ascribed.

Both internationalism and isolationism, however, are words from an old war of words. They have lost whatever useful meaning they may once have had. The new world in which we live gives us no rational choice between the one and the other. We are compelled--all nations are compelled--by the facts of contemporary

life on this planet into a close and continuing contact. It matters little what we choose to call a policy which is based on this reality. However, we can ignore the reality in policy only at great peril to ourselves and to the world.

May I say to you who are scientists, that the propagation of the scientific method has probably been the major element in bringing about this fundamental change in the nature of our relations with the rest of the world. Science has raised universal hopes and is now busy finding ways to bring about their fulfillment. Immense improvements in communications and transportation are drawing all nations into the mainstream of contemporary life. At the same time, the interdependency of all peoples has grown and continues to grow. In all the continents, science has cut the death rates and lengthened the life span, thus greatly increasing not only human numbers but the complexity of the physical and social problems of human survival and fulfillment.

That is the setting in which contemporary foreign policy must function. It is not too much to say that our national well-being has now become inseparable from a constructive participation in world affairs. Indeed, our very existence as a people may well depend upon such participation. To put it bluntly, the rest of the world needs us but we also need it.

This dual consideration has been present in the policies which we have pursued since World War II. On the one hand, the Marshal Plan and other aid programs have been charged with an unprecedented measure of international altruism. They have also derived rationale, however, from what was or, certainly, what was believed to be in the essential self-interest of this nation.

After World War II we saw ourselves emerge almost unscathed in a world of nations which lay largely in ruin, neglect, and exhaustion. We also sensed ourselves as an island of plenty in a sea of poverty--in a sea which could submerge us if it were not made to recede. We saw ourselves strengthened by

expanded military capacity and by the immense accretion of nuclear power. We also saw ourselves in need of reliable friends and allies, as the Soviet Union, too, grew strong in the postwar years.

The inadequacies of the U. N. peace keeping structure led us to seek other ways to protect a security which we found endangered, first, by the Soviet Union, then by China, and, eventually, by upheavals or unrest almost anywhere on the globe, even in places which we had scarcely heard of before the war. In short, our post World War II policies have responded to others on the planet not only with sympathy, interest and support; they have also responded to the rest of the world, out of a doubt, distrust and disillusion born of the failure of the second great war to be followed by a stable and reliable peace.

This dichotomous response to the world has been expressed through traditional diplomacy and through the new diplomacy of wide participation in international organizations.

In more costly forms, the response has also involved great unilateral expenditures for foreign aid, the weaving of a great net of military alliances and immense outlays for the national defense establishment. Since World War II, for example, we have been prompted to provide more than $130 billions in loans and grants of aid to over 120 nations. We have been led to commit ourselves to some form of military action under multilateral defense alliances and bilateral arrangements with 42 nations. In the same period, moreover (1946-1968), a never-ending search for a more secure security--the redundancy is apt--has led us to appropriate in the neighborhood of a trillion dollars for our defense establishment.

As I noted at the outset, however, the broad pattern of these policies has been in transition for some months. We have reached and receded from an apex of postwar international involvement. It is not possible to pinpoint a single cause or moment of change. Certainly, the bitter frustrations of the conflict in Viet Nam have been a factor. This barbarous war

has produced sober reassessments both abroad and at home. In a larger sense, however, it is a quarter of a century after World War II and it is beginning to come clear that the tenor of the world situation has changed significantly. Once, many nations were heavily dependent upon the United States for survival and, once, our surplus capacity to help was great. In truth, there was almost no other place for great segments of a prostrate Europe and Asia to turn except to the United States and this nation responded most readily and generously. Now the rationale for assuming heavy one-sided responsibilities for the survival, security and stability of others has disappeared and, so too, I might add has much of the wherewithal.

Within the nation, too, there has been great change over the past quarter of a century. It is change which has come faster than our capacity and willingness to confront the problems of change. It is not surprising therefore that a growing uneasiness about the inner state of the nation has been evident in the Senate and the Congress for some time. It is

expressive, in my judgment, of similar sentiments among the American people as a whole.

There is, indeed, a deepening concern lest an excessive fixation on the situation abroad has deflected attention, energy and resources from the rising tides of difficulty at home. There has been ground for anxiety, too, that great budgetary deficits and a persistent imbalance of international payments have flashed warnings of an over-extension abroad which have not been adequately heeded.

Indeed, it may well be that the search for an elusive military security has led us too far afield and into costly activities of questionable relevancy in many parts of the world. It may well be that we have even tended in recent years to probe for threats in regions in which none existed. There can be disturbances elsewhere, after all, which do not concern us directly. There can be threats which are not to our peace alone but to the peace of many nations and a unilateral attempt on our part to guard against them may do more harm than good.

Certainly, Africa is indicative of that kind of situation. Nevertheless, a year and a half ago, this nation did touch the edges of unilateral involvement in the Congo. In lengthening retrospect, moreover, I am persuaded that the Asian mainland as distinct from the Pacific Ocean regions (in which our interests, indeed, are broad and intense) will be seen as also confronting us with something of the same kind of situation.

In short, what is becoming clear in the present transition, is that we are neither the world's policeman nor its only prop. Rather, we are a part of a loose international structure. In some respects, our role in its maintenance is of great importance. In others, our significance is less, or that of one among many. The important point, however, is clear; this nation alone can neither sustain nor shape the entirety or even the preponderance of the international structure nor is it in the interests of this nation to try to do so.

It seems to me that our contemporary policies have begun to reflect this reality more faithfully. Largely on the initiatives of the Congress, for example, the foreign aid program has been progressively reduced in recent years. For the current fiscal year, less than $2 billion has been appropriated--the lowest allocation in many years. Moreover, the administration of foreign affairs is being streamlined by sharp reductions in the size of the official overseas establishments of the United States government. As of the first of the year, there were 22,000 American government employees abroad. With cuts which President Johnson has already ordered, the number will have been reduced 4,000 by the end of next June. These figures, of course, are exclusive of the organized U. S. military components abroad which remain enormous and concentrated in two great clusters. The vortex of Viet Nam, for example, has drawn three quarters of a million American forces into and around Southeast Asia. In Europe, pursuant to the commitment to NATO, the number of American military personnel and dependents exceeds half a million.

If signs of restraint are apparent in the administrative machinery of policy, they are also to be seen in its substance. The change is evident in Viet Nam. It should be recalled in this connection that Viet Nam was a minor concern of this nation scarcely a decade and a half ago. Nevertheless, the involvement grew from commitment to commitment into the massive effort which it now is and which, a year ago, had U. S. planes bombing within 10 seconds of China. By the ruthless logic of warfare, moreover, U. S. forces on the ground, from coastal bases, had been edged northwards towards the other Viet Nam and westward to Cambodia and Laos. The fires of conflict were spreading--if not towards war with China--at least towards a war which would engulf Southeast Asia and require hundreds of thousands of additional American forces.

President Johnson has managed, apparently, to halt and reverse this ever-deepening enmeshment. In my judgment, he has now laid the basis for an honorable termination of the war without increasing the jeopardy to the men who are already

committed to Viet Nam and to whom, regardless of policy, we owe a national obligation. In this effort, he has had the full support of the leadership of the Senate, both democratic and republican and much of its membership. That support, I am persuaded, reflects the deepest sentiments of the people of the nation who want the war in Viet Nam ended promptly and honorably.

Until such time, as that can be done, moreover, it seems to me that our policies in Viet Nam should continue to be brought increasingly into line with the limited interests of the United States in Viet Nam and Southeast Asia and into better consonance with our great worldwide interests. That is a way of saying that the conflict should come to be treated in policy as it is in fact--as a struggle which is of preponderant concern to the Vietnamese themselves. In this connection, I would note that President Johnson has pointed out that the United States has no need of permanent military bases, not merely in Viet Nam but, for that matter, anywhere else in Southeast Asia. I concur fully with that judgment. Moreover, the sooner that circumstances

are developed which permit us to carry it into practice, the better for this nation and for all concerned.

The negotiations which are the essential prerequisite for terminating the war in Viet Nam have been joined during the current administration. In initiating them, the President has had very substantial support from the Senate as well as from the President-elect. As the effort to negotiate a settlement in Viet Nam continues into the next administration, I am confident that the new President can expect a continuance of support from the Democratic majority as well as the Republican minority in the Senate.

May I say that it is not only with respect to negotiating a termination of the war in Viet Nam that such support will be forthcoming. Other adjustments in foreign relations, as I have noted, are already in progress and they are likely to continue into the next administration. Insofar as the Democratic majority is concerned, I am confident, for example, that there will be Senate support for continued efforts:

1. To streamline the administration of the nation's foreign affairs abroad;

2. To cut the lavish use of military resources and manpower overseas on the basis of greater efficiency, improved technology and changing circumstances abroad;

3. To lighten our burdens under NATO and to strengthen and update the organization by bringing about a relatively greater European contribution of manpower and resources and increased European responsibility in the direction and management of the organization's affairs;

4. To reduce further the outflow of American resources in the form of military and other foreign aid to areas and nations where the value of these outlays as a contribution to peace is marginal at best;

5. To revitalize diplomacy in both its older and newer forms, to the end that there will be evoked a greater initiative and effort from all nations in bearing the burdens and responsibilities for the world's security and well-being.

In short, in these and in other ways there will be support in the next Senate for an administration whose policies respond increasingly to the world as it is today, not as it was a decade ago, much less as it was a quarter of a century ago. Above all, there is a need for a full recognition that the nation is endangered by the accumulation of problems at home as well as by pressures which may emanate from abroad. There can no longer be, therefore, as there has been in the past, an automatic priority for whatever may carry the related hallmarks of internationalism and defense. Henceforth, we must examine most closely beneath these labels because in these matters, as in any others, all that glitters is not necessarily gold.

What is needed, in short, is a finer sense of discernment in foreign affairs. The need is for a discerning internationalism, if you will, which will permit us to limit our undertakings abroad to those which promise a reasonable contribution to international security and progress. A discerning internationalism will not inhibit us in cooperating with

others in confronting the great range of problems and possibilities of economic and social progress. It will not prevent us from giving a greater emphasis to an international effort to realize more fully the potentials of science, trade and other human endeavors for the enrichment of the human experience. Rather, a discerning internationalism will permit us to work with others, to build in common that which cannot be built by us alone or by any other nation alone--a vital, a progressive, and a peaceful world order.